DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 171 FL 022 937

AUTHOR	Lee, Lina
TITLE	Learning Strategy Instructions as a Key to Success in Second Language Learning.
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	5p.
PUB TYPE	Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT	Northeast Conference Newsletter; n37 p11-13 Win 1995
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Communication; College Students; *Cooperative Learning; Feedback; French; Higher Education; *Interaction; *Learning Strategies; Questionnaires; *Second Language Learning; *Skill Development; Spanish; Student Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	State University of New York Coll at Plattsburgh

ABSTRACT

This article describes how second language learners become more autonomous in the language learning process, how the cooperative learning strategy helps improve the learning outcome, and how second language learners apply learning strategies to learning tasks both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Three activities were offered: interaction among students, interaction between instructors and students, and analysis of how often the learning strategies were used. In Activity 1, a workshop was offered to students to help them become better French and Spanish learners. Students completed the Foreign Language Learning Questionnaire (FLLQ), then were divided into experienced and non-experienced groups based on these results. Using cooperative learning strategies, both groups discussed specific language skills and ideas on language learning. Tasks were offered where students could try out what had just been discussed. In Activity 2, instructors detailed mini-presentations to the students on learning strategies. In Activity 3, students completed a feedback questionnaire. Findings revealed that the instruction for second language learning strategies is an efficient means for helping college students at the beginning level. (Contains 13 references.) (NAV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 383 171

Learning strategy instruction as a key to success in second language learning

Lina Lee

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lina Lee

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL 022937

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Learning Strategy Instruction as a Key to Success in Second Language Learning

Lina Lee, State University of New York at Plattsburgh

Introduction

The popular proficiency-based instruction approach demands second language learners demonstrate functional target language skills. However, language classes limit adequate practice opportunities for each student. So, second language learners often find language classes extremely anxiety provoking and stressful. Indeed, students often ask me: "Why am I not learning after having spent hours and hours studying Spanish?" or "How can I improve my grades?" Both frustrated and anxious students struggle in L2 learning. Especially impacted are those with no experience in L2 learning. Much time has been spent on training prospective teachers on how to teach, but not on training learners how to learn.

Communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) dictates that we spend time teaching students L2 learning strategies. This article addresses the following questions: (1) How can L2 learners become more autonomous in the language learning process?, (2) How does the cooperative learning as "crucial" learning strategy help L2 learners improve the learning outcomes? and (3) How can L2 learners apply learning strategies to learning tasks both in the classroom and outside of the classroom?

Research on L2 Learning Strategies

Students use L2 learning strategies to facilitate learning. They can play an active and influential role in the learning process. Three types of major L2 learning strategies are defined: (1) metacognitive strategies, (2) cognitive strategies, and (3) social/affective strategies (Rubin 1975 & 1981). Considerable research has proved the effectiveness of these strategies in a variety of learning tasks, such as vocabulary, reading, listening comprehension as well as speaking skills (Hosenfeld at al., 1981; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Pressley M., Joel R. Levin & H. D. Delaney, 1982 & Wenden, 1987b). Studies on teaching L2 learning strategies have been limited to ESL and EFL learners (Chamot 1987a; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989). Although the results of these studies showed the positive effect of learning strategies for general language learning, the effect of using "cooperative" learning strategy by experienced learners with the interaction to non-experienced learners, who found L2 learning difficult and unsuccessful, has not yet been explored. Therefore, the workshop for studying a foreign language provided students opportunities to share their language learning experiences with each other to adjust, rule their own learning strategies and finally, apply the learned strategies to a variety of learning tasks. This study focused on the use of the cooperative learning strategy for learning L2 strategies among students.

Workshop on "How to Learn a Foreign Language"

With the recognition of the effectiveness of L2 learning strategies on L2 learning, the workshop on "How to Learn a Foreign Language" was presented to those interested in becoming more sophisticated language learners or those having difficulty in L2 learning. It attempted to assist beginning students in developing and achieving language proficiency in a more meaningful way. Instructors need to create a non-threatening environment for students and to promote the use of learning strategies that facilitate both learning and teaching processes.

Three major activities were presented within and after the workshop.

Activity #1: Interaction among students
Prior to the workshop, the instructors of lower-division language courses of French and Spanish were encouraged to participate in the workshop. Students of first year French and Spanish were asked to complete the Foreign Language Learning Questionnaire (FLLQ) designed by the researcher. Most of the students received no training on how to learn a foreign language. The FLLQ was used to obtain the information about students' language learning experience. Students were asked to indicate their special abilities in learning different language tasks, such as vocabulary, listening, speaking, etc. They were also asked to describe what techniques they use to enhance them in language learning. In addition, students were asked to state in what language areas they needed help and what they wished to learn from the workshop.

After reviewing the responses from FLLQ, the students were divided into two groups: experienced and non-experienced language students by the years of language learning and the number of learning strategies used in the study. Using "cooperative" learning strategy, both experienced and non-experienced students engaged into the discussion of learning strategies for specific language skills and exchanging ideas with each other. Students then were encouraged to try out the learned strategies with the tasks provided by the instructors. Finally, students reported the results of the activity and highlighted the significant portion of the activity. Most of students indicated that they enjoyed most the sharing of ideas with their peers. They liked the non-threatening, relaxing atmosphere, and especially, the cooperative learning environment created for them to acquire L2 learning strategies. Some students pointed out the importance of actually using strategies on integrative tasks because of active mental processing required.

Activity #2: Interaction between instructors and students
After the discussion, students listened to

the mini-presentations prepared by the instructors. This activity provided students opportunities for learning strategies in vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and test-taking. A packet of handouts concerning language learning strategies for vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and test-taking was provided to all students. Instructors demonstrated specific L2 learning strategies. They encouraged students to incorporate these strategies into learning tasks as well as to ask questions for clarifications. Students practiced learning strategies more than once in this activity. They were encouraged to "practice" the strategies both within and outside of the classroom in order to improve the learning outcomes. On the other hand, learning style defined as the way people select to process information was taken into consideration by asking students to choose the strategies that are the most suitable for them to learn. Indeed, students should not be intimidated by the amount of learning tasks nor should they be overwhelmed by the list of L2 learning strategies provided.

Students found the activities valuable, absorbing and helpful. Most found that the most interesting part of the activity for them was to be able to learn and practice the learning strategies separately. Based on the nature of the task, they were able to determine what types of learning strategies should be applied into individual tasks. However, some students found the learning materials difficult and inappropriate for their level of language ability. A variety of learning strategies selected and used by students are found in the list provided for this activity (see Table 1). The definition of each learning strategy is based on the classification scheme developed by O'Malley (1988).

Table 1

Learning Strategies Used for Different Learning Tasks by Beginning Language Learners

Type of Task	Learning Strategies Used
1. Vocabulary	grouping (C), repetition (C), imagery (C), keyword method (C)
2. Listening	directed attention (M), transfer (C), summarizing (C), elaboration (C)
3. Reading	note taking (C), translating (C), contextualizing (C), recombining (C), advance organizers (M)
4. Writing	advance organizers (M), planning (M), monitoring (M), self-evaluation (M)
5. Speaking	question for clarification (S), self-talk (S), cooperation (C)

Interestingly, students used more cognitive strategies than metacognitive strategies for vocabulary, listening and reading. They only used metacognitive strategies for writing and social strategies for speaking. It appears to confirm that the studies conducted by Chamot, O'Malley and Walker (1987). In terms of the application of the learning strategies, students seemed to have encountered difficulty in applying strategies to the tasks for listening and speaking. They suggested that more detailed instruction needed to be provided.

Some students commented that through the interaction between individual instructor and students, they felt less anxious, more confident of actually using strategies selected from the list to the learning tasks. Particularly, they pointed out that learning L2 became more meaningful to them when they encountered more effective approaches than their own. In addition, the instructors served as facilitators who assisted students in the period for asking and answering questions found a great deal of cooperative learning strategy used between language experienced students and language non-experienced students.

Activity # 3: How often did you use the learning strategies?

At the end of the workshop students were asked to fill out the "Your Feedback Questionnaire" and to bring with them a checklist for learning strategies, in which they indicated if they used the strategies and how often they used them when they were practicing and studying the language within and outside of the classroom. Students were asked to return the checklist once every two weeks to the instructor. They were also responsible for self-rating the progress for the learning tasks. In addition, students were encouraged to discuss any problems they encountered during the semester. By the end of semester, students' final exam grades were compared to the mid-term exam grades to find out if their grades were improved by using learning strategies for studying L2.

The results not only showed that students who chose to use selected learning strategies gained better final exam grades than mid-term exam grades but also confirmed the effect of learning strategy from the previous studies for ESL and EFL students by O'Malley at al. (1985b). Students indicated that at the beginning they had difficulties in applying learning strategies for the tasks, especially for listening and writing skills. However, by practicing using strategies, they found that the strategies they selected were beneficial to them. Instructors who participated in the workshop commented that some students gradually changed their attitude to a more positive and motivated attitude toward L2 learning. On the other hand, some students claimed that they couldn't keep up the checklist and found it somewhat frustrating to do so, although they learned practical learning strategies for studying. Students suggested that more guided training for the learning strategies needed to be done before the application of the learning tasks.

Discussion and conclusion

The major goal of the activities designed with the particular format for the study attempted to provide the interaction between students and instructors to learn L2 learning strategies to facilitate both teaching and learning processes. Both experienced students and non-experienced students realized that learning did not occur until the appropriate strategies were selected based on their learning style and the nature of the task. The use of cooperative learning strategy to promote the interaction among students appeared to be particularly beneficial to non-experienced students. Another promising learning-teaching technique for both inside and outside L2 classroom learning is to have instructors as facilitators to engage learning strategies to the learning process. Finally, practicing learning strategies with integrative language tasks such as vocabulary, listening, reading and speaking also has promise for improving learning outcomes.

Students were positive about the instruction for learning strategies for L2 learning. The format of the instruction for learning strategies especially motivated students to learn in an active way, in which they actually interacted with each other and the instructors during the activities. They realized the advantages of learning strategies for L2 learning. In general, the main insights obtained from the activities are (1) students use more cognitive strategies than metacognitive or social-affective strategies, (2) students should choose the learning strategies most suitable to themselves based on their learning style and characteristics, (3) cooperative learning strategy needs to be considered for the instruction for learning strategy, and (4) learning outcomes can be improved through practicing learning strategies consistently during the learning process.

In conclusion, the findings of this study seem to show that the instruction for L2 learning strategies is an efficient means for helping college students at the beginning level. Students should be encouraged to learn and develop their own learning strategies and be trained to use these strategies in order to gain the language proficiency for receptive and productive skills. When developing activities for learning strategies, materials should be carefully designed and selected, such as questionnaires, learning tasks for each language skill, and testing material. Furthermore, L2 instructors should learn how to integrate learning strategies in their classes. In order to achieve the latter objective, one should provide them opportunities for learning L2 strategy as early as possible.

References

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical basis of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics, 1, 1-47.

Chamot, A. U. (1987a). Language development through content. America: The early years. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989). Learning to learn English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hosenfeld, C., Arnold, V., Kirchofer, J., Laciura, J., & Wilson, L. (1981). Second language reading: a curricular sequence for teaching reading strategies. Foreign Language Annals 14 (5), 415-22.

O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzanares, G., Russo, R., & Küpper, L. (1985b). Learning strategies applications with students of English as a second language. TESOL Quarterly 19, 285-296.

O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U., & Walker, C. (1987). Some applications of cognitive theory to second language acquisition. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 9, 287-306.

O'Malley, J. M. (1988). The cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA). Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 9 (1 & 2), 43-60.

O'Malley, J. M. & Chamot, A. U. (1990). Learning strategies in language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). Language Learning strategies: what every teacher should know. New York: Newbury House/Harper & Row.

Pressley, M., Levin, J. R. & Delaney, J. D. (1982). The mnemonic keyword method. Review of Educational Research 52, 61-91.

Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. TESOL Quarterly, 9, 41-51.

Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. Applied Linguistics 11, 117-131.

Wenden, A. (1987b). Incorporating learner training in the classroom. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (eds.), Learner Strategies in Language Learning. (pp. 159-68) Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.